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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PROG](#) [KWBG](#) [IR](#) [UK](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: REP. WEXLER DISCUSSES NATO WITH ISRAELI NATIONAL
SECURITY ADVISOR UZI ARAD

Classified By: DCM Luis G, Moreno, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Opinions vary widely within the GOI regarding an enhanced relationship with NATO. According to National Security Adviser Uzi Arad, there are those within PM Netanyahu's administration who view an enhanced relationship as a real opportunity, including FM Avigdor Lieberman. Others have expressed reservations that such an enhanced relationship might serve to confine or restrain Israel's freedom of action. Arad noted these disparate views cut across party lines -- and with no real consensus, the strategy of former FM Tzipi Livni to gain as much as possible from the current NATO-Israel relationship continues to hold with the new government. Arad said PM Binyamin Netanyahu views Israel's relationship with NATO as a potential method to "share the burden" in preventing a nuclear-armed Iran. Arad discussed these issues with Rep. Robert Wexler on May ¶10. End summary.

¶2. (C) Representative Robert Wexler (D, Florida), accompanied by Deputy Chief of Staff Joshua Rogin, Pol Couns, Poloff and Conoff (notetaker) met with National Security Adviser Uzi Arad at the Prime Minister's Office on May 10. Dr. Arad began the meeting by expressing his long-standing interest in Israel's relationship with NATO, citing his time as the chair of the Atlantic Forum of Israel. Rep. Wexler asked whether Arad might be willing to appear at a Congressional hearing on the subject. Arad expressed some willingness, but added he could recommend other Israeli experts in the event such an appearance was not possible.

¶3. (C) Arad described a lack of consensus within the GOI -- cutting across the political spectrum -- regarding an enhanced relationship with NATO. Many European security/NATO skeptics, for example, were interested in closer bilateral relations with NATO member countries but were concerned with preserving Israel's freedom of action. Others, including FM Lieberman, see an enhanced relationship with NATO as an opportunity. According to Arad, Lieberman has advocated a NATO peacekeeping role in the Middle East -- including specifically the Gaza Strip. Arad suggested the goal is to structure a relationship with NATO that would be "profitable" for Israel, where gains from partnership outweighed drawbacks.

¶4. (C) Arad cited the "British model" as an example of the type of relationship Israel should try to achieve with NATO. The United Kingdom, he said, is an "advanced and proud" Western country with nuclear deterrent capabilities that enjoys a special relationship with the United States -- and yet, the UK maintains a very active and independent role in NATO. He suggested the British never felt that this arrangement limits freedom of action, and added this is the type of model Israel should strive to emulate.

¶5. (C) Arad acknowledged that the relationship with NATO was a matter greatly debated in Israel, with views ranging from support for full membership and its collective defense implications under Article 5, to complete autonomy. He noted

that many Israeli officials are skeptical that some European member states would come to the defense of Israel -- let alone Eastern European members states -- in the event of an attack. Former FM Livni, Arad said, endorsed a "full strategic partnership" with NATO that fell just shy of Article 5 implications. Arad added, however, that these views are not widely supported currently in the GOI.

¶6. (C) Arad said that PM Netanyahu viewed an Israeli relationship with NATO as "a necessary layer" against the nuclear capabilities of Iran, i.e., one stabilizer for an unstable situation. In this way, the issue of Iran would become a shared burden and thus "certain mutually-advantageous activities" could be implemented. According to Arad, Netanyahu sees the NATO-Israeli relationship as a potential "safety net" preventing Iran from "going nuclear." Arad added that Netanyahu also sees value in the NATO-Israeli relationship as a partnership of "like-minded nations," regardless of the Iranian factor.

¶7. (C) Arad said that while not all IDF leadership was on board with an enhanced relationship with NATO, a notable exception is CHOD Lt. Gen. Ashkenazi, who is "intrigued" by this possibility. Ashkenazi has participated in several meetings with his NATO counterparts, and has seen firsthand the usefulness of collaboration. According to Arad, Ashkenazi's predecessor Gen. Halutz "had difficulty" seeing this potential -- which partially explains why he no longer holds the job. Arad also mentioned that Uri Ne'eman was the MOD's top expert on NATO. As there was no time on the Congressman's schedule for a briefing by Ne'eman, Arad instructed an aide to have Ne'eman prepare a written brief and send it to Rep. Wexler.

¶8. (U) Rep. Wexler did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.

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